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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 KATHMANDU 000957

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/IP/NEA  
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS USAID/DCHA/OFDA  
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS PEACE CORPS HQ  
USAID FOR ANE/AA GORDON WEST AND JIM BEVER  
MANILA FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA  
LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY  
TREASURY FOR GENERAL COUNSEL/DAUFHAUSER AND DAS JZARATE  
TREASURY ALSO FOR OFAC/RNEWCOMB AND TASK FORCE ON TERRORIST  
FINANCING  
JUSTICE FOR OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL/DLAUFMAN  
NSC FOR MILLARD  
SECDEF FOR OSD/ISA ALVERSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON NEPAL'S MAOIST INSURGENCY, MAY 15-21,  
2004

REFERENCE: KATHMANDU 0914

SUMMARY

1. Almost 150 local government officials throughout Nepal resigned reportedly due to Maoist threats. Fourteen security personnel were killed and fifteen injured in separate clashes. Thirty-six Maoists were also reported killed. Maoists reportedly killed eight civilians, and abducted over 1000 civilians, including 100 teachers in the far west. Maoist-planted bombs destroyed several government buildings, and damaged a popular tourist resort. Amnesty International (AI) condemned the Maoists for mounting attacks on civilians. The Royal Nepal Army (RNA) Chief of Staff said that "modernization and expansion" of the RNA is needed to combat the insurgency. A three-day nationwide closure (bandh) called by the Maoists May 18-20 was generally well observed in the Kathmandu Valley. End Summary.

LOCAL BODY OFFICIALS RESIGN EN MASSE

2. According to press accounts, almost 150 local government officials resigned throughout Nepal this week, allegedly due to Maoist pressure. Ninety of them resigned en masse from the eastern district of Ilam. Forty-seven resigned from the central districts of Lalitpur, Palpa, Gulmi, Makwanapur and Baglung, and nine from the eastern district of Saptari. Several ward chairmen also resigned in the western district of Banke.

INSURGENCY DEATH TOLL RISES

3. Fourteen security personnel reportedly were killed and fourteen suffered injuries in separate incidents across Nepal: four police officers in the far-western district of Dadeladhura on May 20; two RNA soldiers were killed and four injured in the far-western district of Kanchanpur, and one soldier in Chitwan District on May 19; a police officer in the western district of Kailali and one in the western district of Kapilbastu on May 17; and a police officer in the western district of Dang on May 14. The bodies of four security personnel in Dhading District were recovered on May 15. They officers had been missing since clashing with Maoists on May 11.

4. On May 18, three security personnel were injured when their patrol came under attack by Maoists in Nuwakot district, north of Kathmandu. Five other security personnel also suffered injuries in a Maoist ambush in the western district of Surkhet on May 17. Seven Armed Police Force (APF) personnel were injured on May 16 when a bus carrying them was ambushed on the border of Dang and Kapilbastu districts in western Nepal.

5. Clashes in the western districts of Dadeladhura and Kailali on May 20 reportedly left seventeen Maoists dead. Nineteen Maoists also were killed in other incidents: five, including a platoon commander, in Chitwan District on May 19; four in the central district of Nawalparasi and three in the mid-western district of Surkhet on May 18; four in the districts of Siraha, Nuwakot, Dolakha and Syangja on May 17; and one in the central district of Gorkha on May 15.

ARMY NEEDS MODERNISATION AND EXPANSION

6. Chief of the Army Staff Pyar Jung Thapa of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) said on May 12 that "modernization and

expansion" is necessary to combat the insurgency. Thapa also cited the difficult terrain as another hindrance. He said cooperation between security forces and civil sector was "crucial" in the matter of national security.

#### MAOIST ATROCITIES CONTINUE

17. Maoist violence left eight civilians dead, including a fifteen-year-old student in Sindhupalchowk; a recently nominated Village Development Committee (VDC) chief in the central district of Mahottari on May 18; an elderly woman in the western district of Rupandehi also on May 18; an Indian ex-serviceman in the western district of Kaski district and a Nepali Congress (NC) activist in Saptari District on May 16. Three people, including a 15-year-old student, died when a banner bomb exploded in Sindhupalchok district in central Nepal on May 17; and one person was killed and two injured in the western district of Dailekh on May 15 from a Maoist-planted bomb. On May 19, a four-year-old child was killed and his brother injured when a Maoist-planted socket bomb exploded in Banke district in mid-west Nepal.

18. On May 15, villagers armed with traditional weapons of spears, arrows, and axes attended a mass gathering in the eastern district of Morang to protest Maoist atrocities. The locals, frustrated with the increasing violence, pledged that they were willing and able to retaliate against the Maoists. The mass gathering was attended by people from various ethnic backgrounds

#### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS MAOISTS

19. On May 15, Amnesty International (AI) issued a statement condemning the mounting attacks on civilians by Maoists. AI representatives also called on the rebels to respect human rights and abide by international humanitarian standards. The human rights organization voiced concern over the mass abductions of teachers and students, and threats against aid organizations.

10. On May 20, a report compiled by independent investigators from local human rights organizations blasted the Maoists for violating "basic human rights laws" by firing upon a passenger bus last week (Reftel). The report accuses the insurgents of acting against the Geneva Convention when they began to "fire indiscriminately" at innocent civilians. Maoist commanders in the eastern district of Dolakha issued a press statement on May 18 criticizing the "one-sided propaganda" of the state-controlled press, and denied responsibility. The statement further warns people not to travel in the same vehicles as "fascist army and police."

#### MAOISTS TORCH VEHICLES

11. On May 14, Maoist-detonated bombs in the central district of Palpa destroyed two vans. Rebels in that district also torched three motorcycles. On May 17, Maoists torched a passenger bus in Syangja district, and also set fire to an ambulance in the eastern district of Dhankuta. On May 16, rebels in the western district of Kaski reportedly torched a vehicle owned by Chinese nationals working on a hydropower project in the western district of Salyan.

12. On May 14, Maoists returned a motorcycle it had seized belonging to the Natural Resource Management Program (NARMSAP). The rebels returned the vehicle in the presence of the Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), a local NGO. Gert Meinecke, Charge d' Affaires of the Royal Danish Embassy had published a statement on May 13, demanding the return of the vehicle or NARMAP, which operates under the Danish aid agency DANIDA, would suspend all its operations in the mid-west (Reftel).

#### MAOISTS TARGET DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE AND INDUSTRIES

13. According to media reports, the rebels detonated two powerful bombs inside the Agriculture Research Center in Dailekh district in mid-west Nepal on May 14 and at the Regional Agriculture Training Center in Kanchanpur district. Both buildings suffered extensive damage. On same day, a group of Maoists bombed the Fishtail Lodge, a popular tourist resort in Pokhara. Maoists reportedly bombed a garment factory in the Kathmandu Valley on May 14, injuring two civilians. Suspected Maoists exploded a powerful bomb at the Labor Tribunal in Kathmandu on May 17. A Maoist attack on an airport in the mid-western district of Mugu on May 16 destroyed two buildings. On that same day, the insurgents bombed a tourist resort in Chitwan National Park. On May 17, Maoists bombed a hydropower plant in the mid-western district of Rolpa, leaving residents in the immediate

vicinity without power.

14. On May 17, the local press reported that Maoists stole equipment worth almost USD 55,000 rupees 4 million from Radio Nepal's relay station in the far-western district of Kanchanpur.

#### REBELS, TOURISTS CLASH

15. On May 13 in the western district of Myagdi, a group of five Israeli tourists reportedly clashed with Maoists, after the tourists refused to meet extortion demands by the rebels. No injuries were reported, and the tourists eventually paid a 70 USD "fee" to the rebels, who then left. Eight Japanese tourists were also forced to cancel a trip to Parbat due to the Maoist-imposed blockade in the district.

#### MAOISTS CONTINUE ABDUCTION

16. On May 20, the local press reported that Maoists abducted 1000 civilians in the far western district of Kailali. According to the villagers, the rebels forcibly gathered elderly, children and pregnant women. Security officials in the region said they could not verify the mass abduction. On May 17, Maoists reportedly also abducted 100 teachers from various schools in Sarlahi district. They were released the following day. Maoists abducted other civilians this week: a local council member in Syangja and three civilians on May 14; an engineer in Kanchanpur district on May 15; an elderly man and student in Solukhumbu district on May 17; a priest from a battalion of the RNA in Ramechhap district on May 16; and three government employees in Baitadi district in far-western Nepal on May 16.

#### THREE-DAY GENERAL STRIKE

17. A three-day nationwide closure (bandh) called by the Maoists May 18-20 was generally well-observed in the Kathmandu Valley with little violence, although on May 19 three taxis were damaged after Maoists detonated bombs inside the vehicles. All public transportation, educational institutions, factories and financial institutions were closed. However, on the second and third day of the strike, more vehicles were seen on the roads, including taxis, buses and tempos. Domestic airline officials said that they are incurring losses amounting to thousands of dollars, with over 70 percent of flights from Pokhara being canceled due to the strikes and Maoist-imposed blockades. On May 18, two civilians reportedly died because there was no transportation available to take them to the hospital.

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